



OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
CIVIL AIR PATROL
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AUXILIARY
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA 36112-6332

26 March 2020

Fellow Civil Air Patrol Volunteers and Staff –

Greetings. My hope is that you are well and coping with the restrictions and added stresses we find ourselves facing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Our CAP family is facing situations which we haven't seen on such a grand scale in our lifetimes. Yet we are resilient, strong, dedicated, and motivated to serve, to make a difference in community, state, and nation. We continue to serve in many ways – the list of missions we are performing is growing daily. Often led by our cadets, we are seizing the opportunity to bring innovative solutions to meet the needs of those beautifully intertwined imperatives of people and mission.

The key word that has been on my mind over the past several days is “engagement.” I’m sure that you will agree with me that our being engaged with one another makes our organization stronger. This is even more important during difficult times. “Stay at Home” and “Shelter in Place” directives can have an isolating effect. Not being able to meet face-to-face disrupts our normal routines and social interactions. We thrive on human connection.

I have asked our leaders at all echelons to proactively reach out and engage with the people in their organizations. However, I would contend that we shouldn't put the responsibility for engaging with our CAP teammates on the shoulders of just our commanders. Rather, I see engagement as something that each of us can take on. Cadets, I encourage you to use your mastery of digital communications to engage with one another – no wingman left behind. In fact, cadets, you are equally well-suited to reach out to senior members to check on them, let them know that someone cares, and help identify if they might have a need that you or your squadron mates can help with. In a similar manner, senior members, reach out to others in your organization to see how they are doing. Often times, a person just needs to hear a friendly voice, have a chance to talk to someone, and to know that someone cares. Even sending a brief, impromptu text or email lets a person they have crossed someone's mind and called them to act.

Let's genuinely care, be kind, reach out, and engage with our fellow CAP members. Together we are strong. Together we will not just persevere, we will conquer!

I am proud of you. Thank you for your service as a member of CAP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark E. Smith".

MARK E. SMITH
Major General, CAP

“These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated.” Thomas Paine, Dec. 23, 1776